

**Mayor's column for
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One of the mandates from Tom Ridge and the Department of Homeland Security (HLS) is that in order to qualify for grant funding, counties must perform a risk assessment for possible terrorism acts and have a strategy in place on how to deal with those risks. The Snohomish County HLS Strategy Committee is made up of officials representing police, fire, hospitals, public works, US Navy, PUD, emergency management, Boeing, the Snohomish County Executive, ports, and the Coast Guard. I was also selected to be a part of the committee, and I represent all elected officials in Snohomish County.

We have had several meetings and have identified what we believe to be attractive terrorist targets and we have identified who is responsible for protection of those targets, as well as the likelihood of an attack. We have submitted grant requests for some equipment and we will submit additional requests shortly.

Homeland Security, the Office of Domestic Preparedness, and now the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness are interchangeable names for an agency that is changing almost hourly. The creation of a federal department tasked with our safety from terrorism will be a work in progress for many years.

A couple weeks ago I participated in a workshop designed to "provide a forum for senior officials to discuss strategic and executive level issues and challenges related to CBRNE/terrorism incident preparedness and practices, and enhance collaboration and cooperation amongst the emergency response community." Are you wondering what "CBRNE" could possibly be? It means chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive.

Our committee did its homework and identified what we considered targets and then looked at how to protect them and consequently, protect ourselves at the same time. It should come as no surprise to you that some of the identified targets are trains, ferries, hospitals, schools, shopping malls, and, of course, Boeing and Naval Station Everett. Treatment plants and water systems are large concerns as well.

A focus of the seminar was cooperation between local fire and police agencies, particularly in times of crisis. The instructor led us through a mock disaster to show the necessity of mutual cooperation. The exercise started with the emergency response to the event, walked through how it was handled by local authorities, hospitals, and elected officials, and finished up with how the recovery and restoration process should work.

As we wrapped up the training, I asked how the instructors felt about our preparedness. Their answer was very encouraging. They felt we were ahead of the "rest of the country" in our preparations. We are fortunate to have public safety mutual aid agreements already in place. As a county, we have done an excellent job of disaster preparedness. Floods and earthquakes are far more common than terrorism acts, but those two events have prepared us and trained us in our response to disasters.

No one can ever be completely prepared for acts of terrorism, but the cities of Snohomish County have done a good job on your behalf of being as ready as possible.